

Sub B2  
A1

Referring now to the drawings and, first, particularly to Fig. 1 thereof, there is illustrated therein a drive roller 1 for driving a transport belt 3 which is wrapped around four deflecting or diverting rollers 2. The drive roller 1 is driven uniformly by a non-illustrated drive, for example, an electric motor, so that the drive roller 1 revolves continuously during the printing operation. Paper sheets, which are not shown in Fig. 1, are located on the top section or taut belt strand 11 of the transport belt 3 during the printing operation, the paper sheets moving on the belt strand 11 in Fig. 1 from the righthand side to the lefthand side in the direction of the arrows R. Two printing heads 5 are also shown in Fig. 1, above the belt strand 11, these printing heads 11 being spaced a very slight distance from the transport belt 3 and thus, consequently, from the non-illustrated paper sheets disposed thereon. These printing heads 5 may have several hundred nozzles and may thus be of considerable dimensions.

In the Claims:

Cancel claims 3 and 4.

Sub B1  
A2

Claim 1 (amended). A device for holding a sheetlike article on a movable underlying surface for transporting the sheetlike article at least in one direction selected from the group

thereof consisting of a direction into and a direction out of an operating station having printing heads, the device comprising:

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a movable belt formed with through-passage holes, said belt having a surface underlying the sheetlike article, the sheetlike article being retainable by pneumatic pressure on said surface; and

a screening device disposed locally fixedly with respect to the operating station, said screening device serving for reducing an airflow in a region of the printing heads at least with respect to adjacent regions, the reduction in the airflow resulting from the sheetlike article being held on said underlying surface, said screening device including:

a cover plate disposed beneath said belt, said cover plate formed with pass-through openings; and

a sheet-like mesh formed with holes and disposed beneath said cover plate, the holes of said mesh being of such number and size to cause, as a result of flow resistance thereof, an adequate reduction in the airflow in the region of the printing heads.

*Back*  
*Q1*  
*Q2*

Claim 5(amended). The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, including a virtually limited first suction chamber disposed beneath the region of the printing unit and a negative-pressure source, said screening device having a throttle opening, said first suction chamber being connected to said negative-pressure source via said throttle opening.

Claim 6(amended). The holding and transporting device according to claim 5, including further suction chambers connected to said negative-pressure source, said further suction chambers being located adjacent said first suction chamber and having a greater negative pressure than that of said first suction chamber.

Claim 7(amended). The holding and transporting device according to claim 6, wherein said cover plate covers said suction chambers and serves for guiding said belt.

*Back*  
*Q1*  
*Q2*

Please Add the Following Claims:

Claim 12. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein pass-through openings of said cover plate in the region of the printing heads have a smaller pass-through surface area than pass-through openings outside the region.

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Claim 13. The holding and transporting device according to  
claim 1, wherein said mesh only applies in areas where the  
printing heads are located.

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